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CONSUMERS' MARKET SERVICE

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Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Washington, D. C.

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November 15, 1938

Supplies of most foods ~~relished at Thanksgiving~~ dinners probably will be considerably larger than a year ago, and the outlook in general is for a cheaper dinner than in 1937. Marked increases in supply over 1937 are in prospect for poultry, fresh pork, better grade beef, butter, grapefruit, oranges, cabbage, sweetpotatoes, celery, onions, and cereals. Slightly larger amounts of turkey are expected. Apples, nuts, eggs, cranberries, and potatoes, however, are expected to be less plentiful.

Job of selecting a good turkey for Thanksgiving is simplified if consumers rely on government graded birds. Sometimes birds are individually tagged with the grade but more often the grade is stamped on the shipping box which contains several turkeys. The 3 government grades usually found on turkeys are U.S. Prime (Grade A), U. S. Choice (Grade B) and U. S. Commercial (Grade C). Difference in grade depends largely on the amount of fat on the carcass, the flesh covering the breast, thighs, and back, and the care used in killing and dressing the bird.

Government graded turkeys also are tagged either as young or old, and as toms or hens. Young turkeys are less than a year old, are soft meated and have a flexible breast bone. They require less time to cook than old turkeys. Tom or male turkeys run to heavier weights than hens. The edible meat in a turkey represents about two-thirds of the dressed weight.

Cranberry situation remains unchanged from a month ago and supplies still are expected to be considerably smaller than last year's record size crop. Usually cranberry marketings are heaviest, and prices are lowest in November. Bulk of supplies come from Massachusetts, and the season generally ends in December. Top quality cranberries have a fresh plump appearance, a high luster and are firm. Moisture in berries, caused by keeping them in cold storage, does not indicate poor quality and should not be confused with moisture caused by injury or damage which impairs quality.

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Upward trend in citrus production has tended to lengthen the marketing season for oranges and grapefruit and to smooth out seasonal price fluctuations. Usually orange and grapefruit prices are lowest in the winter months and highest in the summer and early fall months. Last year there was very little seasonal price increase between these two periods primarily because of large supplies. This year record supplies of both grapefruit and oranges are in prospect. Prices have been relatively low since the beginning of the season in October. Florida and Texas are supplying the bulk of current orange and grapefruit marketings, but shipments of California Navel or winter oranges are commencing and are expected to increase sharply during the latter part of this month.

Nut supplies this Thanksgiving probably will be much smaller than in 1937. Last year nut production reached relatively high levels because of record crops of walnuts, almonds, and filberts, and a close to record size pecan crop. Current crops of almonds and pecans are expected to be about 40 percent smaller than in 1937 while a 25 percent drop is in prospect for walnuts. Filbert production probably will be about the same as a year ago.

Production of fall and early winter vegetables in the Southern and Far Western States probably will be slightly larger than in 1937. Marked increases are in prospect for snap beans, egg plant, and peppers, and slight increases in tomatoes and cucumbers. Sharp decreases, however, are in prospect for kale and cauliflower. Production in these States during the winter period represents only a small part of annual supplies, but a large part of early winter supplies.

Apple prices generally go up after October as supplies move out of storage. In years such as the present, when supplies are small there usually is a marked rise until the new crop is available the following summer.

Milk production from mid-October to mid-May is expected to be slightly higher than a year ago, and probably the largest on record for the winter period. Present relatively low butter prices have been due principally to heavy milk production this year. Wholesale butter prices went up a half-cent a pound this past week end, the first price increase since this summer. Ordinarily butter prices go up seasonally during the last half of the year.

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Christmas shoppers probably will find turkey supplies, as well as other poultry, larger this year than last. Seasonal low on poultry prices usually continues throughout December, with a seasonal rise beginning in January and February. A larger total meat supply is also estimated. Better grade beef will be more plentiful than last year, while the supply of lower grades probably will be slightly smaller. Pork and lamb supplies will be larger than last year, as also will butter, oranges, grapefruit, tangerines, onions, sweet potatoes, cabbage, and cereals. Dried fruits, nuts, apples, and potatoes are in smaller supply than last year, while dried beans, peanuts, rice, and winter pears are more abundant.

Citrus fruit for the holiday trade will be in plentiful supply. Tangerines usually show a seasonal low price in December. A large movement may be expected during this month for available supplies exceed last year's. The bulk of this bright hued member of the citrus family comes from Florida. It usually attains top quality during December and early January. Oranges and grapefruit continue in large supply and unless some unpredictable catastrophe reduces the crop, may be expected to do so until late spring. Prices have continued relatively low since the opening of the season in October, while quality is improving as the season progresses.

December is a root crop month and seasonal supplies of turnips, rutabagas, and parsnips are at hand.

Peak prices for eggs come in late November or early December. Smaller storage holdings have been the major factor behind high price levels this year. Storage is important in December even though fresh production increases at this time of the year. The seasonal decline in egg prices which generally takes place from December through April sometimes is checked temporarily by spells of cold weather which may slow up production and hinder deliveries to market.

Pork outlook remains unchanged from last month. Pork supplies will be larger during the current marketing season which ends September 30, 1939 than in 1937-38. Hog marketings generally increase through January, then decrease in the late winter and early spring, and again increase seasonally in the late spring and early summer months. This seasonal fluctuation results from the two pig crops each year.

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Lamb supplies from December through April probably will be much larger than a year ago. About half the annual lamb supplies are slaughtered during this period, and the bulk of marketings consist of lambs fattened on grain. Supplies of grain fed lambs are expected to be smaller than the large numbers of the 1937-38 season, even though they probably will be at least as large as in the 4 preceding seasons. But the decrease over 1937-38 is expected to be more than offset by more grass fed lambs than a year ago.

The outlook for winter vegetables from the Southwestern and far Western states is for larger acreages than 1937 of egg plant, snap beans, and peppers. Kale, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, and cauliflower will be in shorter supply than last year. Recent reports of cold weather in the producing areas indicate the hazards which may affect the supply. The damage to date from frost has been only slight but the future depends on the vagaries of the weather.

Dairy products made considerably less than the usual seasonal price advance during the past month. Total milk production on November 1, was the highest on record for that date. Prices of butter rose slightly from mid-October to mid-November but only about one-third of the advance ordinarily occurring during the month. Storage stocks of butter are of record size and October made a new record for that month. Heavier butter movement out of storage, resulting from lighter fresh receipts and holiday demand, is reported for the last week of November.

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Poultry supplies for the holidays seem plentiful. Turkeys probably will be slightly greater in number than last year. Marketings of other dressed poultry also have been heavier during November than a year ago and probably will continue so. The seasonal decline in chicken prices has been greater than normal and more than last year. The usual seasonal increase in poultry prices may be expected in late winter and early spring. Stocks of frozen poultry in storage are expected to be greater at their peak in early 1939 than in 1938. Storage stocks as of late November are 22 percent above the 1925-34 average.

Favorable fall weather and feed supplies have helped to increase egg production resulting in less than the usual seasonal advance in egg prices for this time of the year. Changes in weather conditions may materially affect egg prices during winter months, particularly when the reserve supply of eggs in storage is low as is the case this year.

Supplies of grain fed beef are expected to be considerably larger than last year, although other kinds,--grass fed steers, cows, heifers, calves,--will be somewhat smaller, but the total beef supplies will be greater. Aids in buying the kind of beef you want may be obtained by asking for government graded beef. Look for the grade stamp on the cut of meat. The official classes of steer and heifer beef in order of preference are steer and heifer beef, cow beef, stag beef, and bull beef. The official grades for beef are: U. S. Prime or No. A-1,; U. S. Choice or No. 1,; U. S. Good or No. 2,; U. S. Medium or No. 3,; U. S. Common (Plain) or No. 4,; U. S. Cutter or No. 5,; U. S. Low Cutter or No. 6. The term "Prime" is not used in standards for grades of cow, stag, or bull beef. U. S. Grades are available also for lamb and mutton, veal and calf, and pork (fresh).

Total Lamb supplies are estimated as slightly larger than last year, with some increase in grain fed lambs and less westerns. Pork situation remains about the same as a month ago with prospects of larger supplies during the current marketing season which ends September 30, 1939 than in 1937-38.

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Citrus fruits continue to be available in large supplies. Cooperation among growers, handlers, and retailers promises some decrease in margins for the remainder of the season. Tangerines are in season and make an especially attractive holiday fruit. Oranges and Grapefruit are especially plentiful, with prices lower than a year ago.

Supplies of snap beans and fresh cabbage, and beets for winter market promise to be larger than a year ago. Plantings of carrots, celery, lettuce, spinach, and early Irish potatoes are reported less than a year earlier. The total acreage of the fall and winter vegetable crops available for harvest this season is expected to be about 10 percent larger than a year earlier. Florida strawberry plantings are reported 20 percent larger than last year.

Canned vegetable supplies probably will be about the same as the record large supply available in 1937-38 and considerably above annual average disappearance. Although canning in 1938 generally was less than a year earlier, carry overs brought the supply practically up to last year's total. Canned snap beans, lima beans, and peas are more plentiful than a year ago, while tomatoes and tomato juice are less. Dry Edible beans are plentiful, slightly exceeding the record large supply of 1937. Rice probably will exceed last year's record supply and provide a large surplus over prospective domestic needs, insular shipments and exports.